

City of Ashland - Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Housing Committee was held on **October 13, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. via GoTo Meetings.**

Committee Members Present: Liz Franek, Eric Lindell, Kathy Beeksma, Kaas Baichtal, and Megan McBride

Committee Members Absent:

Staff Present: Mayor Lewis

Citizens Present: Liz Seefeldt, Millie Rounsville

Mayor Lewis opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

Agenda

1) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda with item five ahead of item four by Eric Lindell.
Seconded by Kathy Beeksma . Passed unanimously.

2) a.) Approve minutes from the August 11, 2021 Housing Committee meeting

Tabled. Minutes will be available at the next meeting.

3) Citizen Comments

Liz Seefeldt commented that she appreciates being able to sit on the committee representing the BRICK before Eric.

4) Old business

a) Updates on progress with CDBG, HIP, and property maintenance

CDBG – Megan summarized that the fund is looking good for more projects and that there will be more advertising for the program.

HIP – Megan summarized that the fund is also looking good, there are some issues with getting contractors especially with scheduling.

Property Maintenance – Megan mentioned that there will be three interviews for the position.

Deb asked what people should do if they have a property maintenance complaint.

Megan answered that they should contact her, but there is not a lot that can happen right now without a designated property maintenance person.

5) New Business

- a) Discussion and recommendations regarding priorities and timeline for marketing Beaser Avenue Redevelopment Site.

Deb Lewis explained what previous developers have proposed for the site.

Megan then elaborated further stating that she wants more direction from the committee concerning what they would like to see or some priorities of what the committee would like to see on the site. She also would like to establish a timeline for development.

Eric Lindell said that in terms of marketing he would like to see a variety of proposals and not rush on making a decision. He also mentioned that he would like to see a mix of housing options on the site some that is geared towards young professionals.

Kaas Baichtal commented that a common complaint by realtors is that there isn't a lot of buildable lots or prepared lots in town that have infrastructure nearby. Some of these people have not directly contacted the city.

Deb answered that as a city we need to have a process which allows anyone to come forward with development ideas.

Megan followed up on Kaas and Eric's comments and explained that there could be lots divided. She also asked if there should be more focus on rentals or subdivisions.

Eric asked if there could be an RFP that is broader than just a single developer.

Megan answered that there is nothing in the RFP that excludes different kinds of development as long as they have a plan.

Eric comments that one problem he has with subdivisions is funding for each site.

Megan commented that phasing could be an option for that issue, so if a developer doesn't move forward in a certain timeframe the land reverts back to the city.

Liz Franek asked if we could get more feedback from the existing neighborhood which addresses what they would want or the wider community.

Kaas commented that the area is large and that Beaser and 11th have two different characteristics and splitting up the site could reflect that.

Kathy noted that she liked the idea of the multiple uses in the area, but is concerned about the idea of a subdivision because she wants Ashland to be more unique. She also mentioned forward thinking and creating some homes that are senior friendly or assisted living. However ideas are great, but who can put down the money.

Deb agreed that the developer needs to know that this could be profitable. She also asked if the committee agrees that the area should be used for housing.

Kathy said that businesses do not have options in the area and there is no space for her large enough or ADA compliant.

Eric said that he could not see something commercial in that area since it doesn't match with the neighborhood.

Kathy mentioned that there is a police station over there, also we could specify that we don't want industrial or something that would bring heavy traffic.

Eric countered and said that housing would be a good fit with the tight market in Ashland.

Kathy noted that she doesn't want to restrict the potential bids, but wants the committee to keep their minds open to something other than housing.

Kaas mentioned that the Beaser site could benefit from small commercial storefront that could be business oriented, like a café.

Deb notes that keeping development flexible. She also mentioned that there are two groups that seem to need niche housing, seniors and younger professionals.

Eric said that people in his age group want some affordable consistent housing, even something that is sustainable.

Deb continued to say that we need to work with these two groups.

Kathy noted that these two communities can be side by side, and spoke about a study where rural Ashland County is growing. A mixed use, diverse community is needed. All income levels should also have a space in our community.

Eric commented that she agrees with Kathy, but also thinks a lot of young professionals are pushed out of the city because there aren't properties they can afford.

Deb asked how we can make a mixed use community work. She suggested that a neighborhood meeting could help with these ideas, and that consulting citizens early would be best.

Kathy and Kaas both agreed that a neighborhood meeting would be beneficial to get community input.

Kaas also mentioned that multiple meetings with multiple forms of community contact would be great so no one feels left out.

Deb mentioned that the city tried to do something similar with the Ore Dock with multiple meetings, and noted that it is a lengthy and expensive process. Sometimes people's expectations are raised too high.

Eric mentioned that the neighbors should be a key group to work with on this instead of the whole community.

Kathy stated that what we should ask to that area is “who would be a good neighbor?” That question could be guided to match the discussion that is currently happening.

Kaas mentioned that consensus is easier to find when asking people what they want, not what they don't. If a survey is conducted a written section would be great.

Kathy noted that the press could be a way to ask for community feedback and a way to advertise for developers and meetings.

Megan mentioned that in her experience with the Ore Dock that people want to have a neighborhood meeting first before consulting the whole community. Is this something that we could agree on?

The committee agreed that meeting with neighbors first and then going to the larger community would be best.

Deb reiterated that seeing what demographics move to the Timeless Timber site as well to see what housing is still needed.

- b) Discussion regarding strategic demolition strategies to address blighted structures.

Megan summarized that there have been some potential changes to raise orders. The city hasn't used raise orders in the past, but these changes could impact that. A few properties have consistent property maintenance issues and turning those properties around is difficult.

Kaas mentioned that you shouldn't raise if you can renovate.

6) Announcements

- a) Updates on residential development on the Timeless Timber site

Megan summarized that planning and permit processes are going well, and they are hoping to start construction in the spring. There will be some community outreach as well.

- b) Updates on CUP for an Emergency Residential Facility at 2300 Lake Shore Dr. W

Mille Rounsville noted that her first goal is to close on the 2300 Lake Shore Drive property. The sign on the property will be removed. Homeless help groups in the area are also reaching out to coordinate with the shelter. There will be some renovations to the property and the goal is to be open after Thanksgiving.

Kaas suggested that the shelter have a social media presence to answer questions that the community has and to address rumors.

Liz commented that she wonders what will be available for homeless in the interim.

Millie noted that this is a difficult issue; there are few places that are taking vouchers. Some places are considering vouchers as a risky business and don't want to take them. Hotels are willing to take specialty cases but don't want to accept vouchers as a common practice.

7) Adjournment

| |
|--|
| Motion to adjourn made by Liz Franek , seconded by . Passed unanimously. |
|--|

Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am. Minutes by Mandelyn Lyons.